



# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Update: July, 2001  
*Fact Sheet*

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## **Philip Services Corporation – Seattle (Georgetown), WA Outdoor Air Quality Health Consultation**

### **Health Consultation Completed**

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has completed a health consultation to evaluate whether workers at businesses near the Philip Services Corporation (Philip Services) facility in the Georgetown neighborhood of Seattle are being exposed to potentially harmful levels of chemicals released by the facility into the surrounding air.

DOH determines whether people are being exposed to harmful levels of chemicals by looking at the type and amount of chemicals people are exposed to; how they are exposed (breathing, eating or touching); how long they are exposed; and their age and physical characteristics.

### **Site Background**

The Philip Services facility, located at 734 South Lucile Street, treats and stores industrial and household hazardous wastes. The waste handled by Philip Services includes petroleum, solvents, metals, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), antifreeze, and cyanide. These wastes are received and shipped off the facility by tanker trucks, rail cars, and bulk containers.

The wastes handled at Philip Services contain chemicals that can be released into the air during handling and treatment. Air pollution control systems have been installed by Philip Services where the highest levels of chemicals are expected. However, it is unclear whether these

systems are working properly because only limited air testing has been conducted.

### **Contaminants of Concern**

The primary contaminants of concern are volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs are a group of chemicals found in paints and are used as solvents for industrial degreasing and household cleaning products. VOCs easily evaporate into the air. Philip Services also handles metals, petroleum, pesticides, PCBs, and other organic chemicals but these chemicals do not easily evaporate into the air. However, they can be found in dust, mist, or other particles that may be released during waste handling and treatment.

### **Conclusion**

**DOH does not have enough information to know if the air emissions from the Philip Services Georgetown facility pose a health risk to workers at nearby businesses.**

### **Recommendations**

DOH recommends the following actions to assure that workers near Philip Services are not exposed to harmful levels of chemicals:

1. Philip Services should make sure that their Georgetown facility is designed, operated, maintained, and monitored to prevent the release of harmful levels of chemicals into the air.

2. Local, state, and federal agencies should ensure that any design, operation, maintenance or monitoring problems at the Georgetown facility that could result in the release of harmful levels of chemicals into the surrounding air are addressed.
3. Philip Services should conduct outdoor air sampling at, within, and next to the facility boundaries to determine whether harmful levels of chemicals are being released into the air.

## What About Indoor Air?

Chemicals that leaked from storage tanks formerly located on the Philip Services property have contaminated local groundwater. Because many of these chemicals evaporate easily, they can move up through the ground and into the indoor air of nearby homes and businesses.

DOH, Philip Services, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency took indoor air samples in August 2000 to evaluate whether indoor air quality was affected by the contaminated groundwater. **This first round of indoor air samples did not indicate an immediate health concern because only very low levels of chemicals were found.** The source of the chemicals found in the indoor air could not be determined, because the chemicals that were found in the groundwater are also found in common sources such as car exhaust and household cleaners.

DOH collected more indoor air samples in March 2001 to better determine if the chemicals are moving from groundwater into indoor air at harmful levels.

## What's Next?

Once the evaluation of the second round of indoor air results is completed, another health consultation report will be prepared by DOH. The report will be sent to the local library and the community will be notified about DOH's findings through a fact sheet. The report and fact sheet are expected to be available later this summer.

**For information or a copy of the health consultation, call or e-mail:**

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